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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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APRIL 8 1981

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of March 27 expressing concern over past disappearances in Argentina and requesting a report on a number of individuals alleged to have disappeared.

The most fully documented compilation of disappearances in Argentina contains the names of 3,500 persons whose whereabouts are unknown. The issue of accounting for these missing persons is the most difficult human rights issue facing the Argentine Government today. To the extent that it raises concern of the military over recriminations and reprisals by a future civilian government, it impedes progress toward restoration of due process and return to democratic rule. Over the longer term, we expect the Argentines themselves will resolve this issue. In the interim, we will continue to use our influence privately and in international fora to encourage Argentine officials in their efforts to make information available to the families of missing persons.

There has, however, been significant progress in other areas. There have been no confirmed disappearances this year. The number of persons held by the Executive on other than common criminal charges has been reduced from about 3,000 in 1977 to around 300 today. Greater press and judicial discretion exists. We expect this progress to continue.

As to the specific individuals you refer to in your letter, we and our Embassy in Buenos Aires have on a number of occasions solicited information from the Argentine Government concerning the welfare and whereabouts of these and other missing persons. While there as yet been little positive response, we have informed our Embassy in Buenos Aires of your interest

The Honorable

Clement J. Zablocki

Chairman

House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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in these cases, asking that it remain alert to any information that becomes available and to inform you of significant developments.

Yours sincerely,

CRW

Richard Fitzhugh
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

cc: American Embassy
Buenos Aires, Argentina

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